

Fort Sam Houston National Historic Landmark
Barracks (Building #143, Cavalry Post)
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3303-12

HABS
TEX,
IS-SANT,
39L-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Parks Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
FORT SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

HABS
TEX
15-SANT
39L-

BARRACKS (Building #143, Cavalry Post)

HABS No. TX-3303-12

Location: On the south side of Stanley Road between Liscum Road and New Braunfels Avenue, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner and Occupant: United States Army

Present Use: Reserve Unit Barracks

Significance: This red brick barracks, facing on the parade ground along the south side of Stanley Road, is the principal structure within a small grouping of related buildings, including latrine and mess hall, located to the rear of the barracks. The building is one of four identical barracks constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century as part of the Fort Sam Houston Cavalry Post Development.

All the structures in the complex, built from standardized plans from the Office of the Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army, are virtually unchanged on the exterior and are of compatible materials and design. As a whole, they provide an excellent example of turn-of-the-century military post design.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: November, 1907.
2. Architect: Office of the Quartermaster General, United States Army; Plan #162C.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: U.S. Army from date of construction to the present.
4. Contractor: Unknown
5. Original Plan and Construction: A two-story, rectangular red brick building with shallow attic and full basement. A two-tier porch runs across the front and rear. The front (north) facade is 13 bays long with the ridge of a hipped roof running east-west. The central entrance is highlighted with pedimented gables projecting over the three middle bays on both front and rear elevations. These gables open up a small attic space that is lit by modified Palladian windows in the front and rear gables.

The building was constructed at a cost of \$28,367, and was originally designed to accommodate approximately 86 men.

6. Alterations and Additions: The exterior appearance of the building has remained virtually unchanged. The first floor porch decking on the front and rear however, are now of poured concrete.

Interior plumbing and communal bathrooms were installed sometime after 1940. Original open-floor plans have been broken up (primarily on the west end of the barracks) by plywood partition walls.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: This two-story red brick barracks is one of four identical structures on Cavalry Post built in the first decade of the twentieth century. Four similar barracks were also constructed of yellow brick. Built from standardized plans from the Office of the Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army, the barracks is basically utilitarian in its design. Use of clay tile for the roof, segmental-arch openings, and the prominent modified Palladian window in the front and rear gables however, add a more distinctive element to this simple design.
2. Condition of Fabric: The condition of the fabric is good on the exterior; the interior condition is generally good with pressed tin ceiling in poor condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all Dimensions: This structure measures 13 bays x 2 bays, two stories with a basement. The shape is rectangular, with front and rear full length, two-tier porches.
2. Foundations: The foundations are limestone ashlar and rubble.
3. Wall Construction, Finish and Color: There is a raised, rock-face limestone basement approximately 3' above grade (varying at different locations), projecting 3"-5", forming water table line. This basement level supports the main structure, of smooth red brick set in common bond in a five-row stretcher, one-row header pattern.

4. Structural System, Framing: This structure has brick load bearing walls and a wood-frame roof structure.
5. Porches, Stoops and Bulkheads: There is a wood frame, full-length, two-tier porch on the front and rear of the building, which is supported by modified Tuscan columns. Balustrades are pipe railings, painted black. The first-story flooring on both the front and rear is poured concrete, set on exposed rock-face masonry piers. The second tier floor is narrow 2" wide tongue-and-groove wood decking.

Access to the front second-story porch is only possible from the interior rooms; the rear second-story porch has a central metal flight of stairs running west to east from the first floor up to the second level.

The front porch is raised eight steps from grade, with three evenly-spaced poured concrete flights of stairs across the front.

The rear porch is raised seventeen steps above grade, with poured concrete stairways at each end.

The center double-door basement entrance on the rear facade has a prominent bulkhead. A shallow poured concrete and rock basement bulkhead drops five steps below grade to the double-door basement entrance.

6. Chimneys: Four chimneys are symmetrically placed--one at each end of structure and one on either side of projecting central gabled bay. Chimneys are all interior chimneys set to the rear (south) of the building behind the ridge line.

A fifth chimney rises from the east side of the front (north) gabled bay in front of the ridge line.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and Doors: The center front double-door entrance has two five-panel raised panel doors with panels set horizontally. The doors have a five-pane segmental arch transom light above the five-pane side lights on either side. The entry is finished with a segmental triple rowlock above.

The side front doors on the first and second floors in both the front and rear (at the third and eleventh bays) are also five-panel doors with fixed, three-pane rectangular transoms set in segmental archways. There is also one doorway on the front first floor at the west end, between the twelfth and thirteenth bays, breaking the symmetry.

The rear center hall door is much simpler, set in a segmental arched opening with no transom or sidelights. It has a double rowlock above.

The exterior basement level entrances in the rear have glass-paned double doors in the center and single five-panel doors on either side. Single doors have segmental double rowlock detail above.

- b. Windows: Six-over-six, double-hung sash windows with painted limestone lug sills are set in brick segmental arches, with a double rowlock above.

The attic-level windows in the projecting gables are of a modified Palladian form. The windows have operable six-over-six, double-hung sash windows with flanking multiple fixed panes, all contained within a semi-circular arched opening. The window has a double-arched rowlock above, centered with a keystone.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape and Covering: The roof is basically a hipped form with slightly flared ends extending out over the two-tier porch in the front and rear. This hipped form is broken by wide central projecting gables to the north and south. The roof is covered with French clay tiles, and with rolled tiles capping the ridge line and roof seams.
- b. Cornice and Eaves: The wide eaves on all sides are supported by decoratively carved outriggers.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. **Basement:** The basement is divided into three separate sections with bare rock walls, poured concrete floor and center stone pier supports. Each section is accessible by individual rear exterior basement doors--the center portion has both a double-door exterior entrance and also an interior staircase from the first floor center hall. The basement houses the hot air heating system in three separate units--Mueller "Climatrol" blower filter units.

b. **First Floor:** Originally, this floor had an open central hall with stairway flanked by open bays on either side (to the east and west). The east end bay has remained virtually intact while the west end has received a number of alterations.

The east end is a simple open space with five exposed columns running from the east to the west end in the center of the room. The open space to the west has been divided into three individual "squad" rooms, a large community bathroom in the southeast corner, and an individual squad room in the northeast corner. An open area remains in the center area with two exposed columns.

c. **Second Floor:** The three-run staircase opens into a central hall with two squad rooms (one 6 bunk and one 3 bunk) at the head of the stairs along the center north wall. As on the first floor, the east end remains an open space with five exposed columns running east and west.

On the west end, a community latrine occupies the southeast corner of the wing. The rest of the space, however, is open with three exposed columns remaining.

d. **Attic:** A three-run frame staircase to the east of the center hall flight (behind a five-panel door) leads up to a small unfinished attic in the center cross gable. The space is naturally lighted by the modified Palladian windows on the north and south facades in the gable projections.

2. **Stairways:** The main stairway in the center hall is a three-run stair with an open string and simple detail. The newel post is undecorated, while the balusters are turned. The entire stairway is painted cream color.

A simple frame stairway to the basement runs underneath the main first floor stair, and is accessible through a four-panel door beneath the stair run.

The attic stairway is a three-run frame stairway, with a simple two-by-four handrail and no balustrade.

3. Flooring: The floors are predominantly brown 12"-square tiles throughout; poured concrete floors are found in the basement and wide 5" tongue-and-groove flooring is used in the attic.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: All walls are plaster, with pressed tin ceilings on the first floor, and plaster ceilings on the second floor. Simple baseboards have quarter-round moldings at the top and base. A 5"-6" simple wainscote runs approximately 2-1/2' above the floor level.

Vertical board tongue-and-groove wainscoting is found in the first and second hallway along the stairwell.

5. Doorways and Doors: Most interior doors are five-panel doors with three-pane operable transoms above (although most have been painted shut).

Doorways off the center hall leading into rooms on the first and second floors are double doors with five-pane operable transoms above. All doorways and windows have plain trim.

6. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating: The building is heated by gas-fired, hot-air furnaces. Three units are housed in the three separate basement rooms. Hot air is circulated throughout the building through corner vents in the first and second floor rooms.
- b. Lighting: Lighting is provided primarily by suspended florescent light fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The barracks faces north on Stanley Road--one of eight similar barracks on Artillery Post built in 1907. Support buildings of similar material are in the rear, south of the barracks. The barracks faces the Post's central parade grounds--an area known as Treat Field.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old Views:

Fort Sam Houston Museum, Building #123, San Antonio, Texas.

B. Bibliography:

Real Estate Records, Directorate of Facilities Engineering, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

Handy, Mary Olivia, History of Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas: Naylor, Inc., 1951, p. 66-67.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Correspondence and other miscellaneous files relating to Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The detailed survey of eighteen (18) architecturally representative structures, and a group of streetscapes, at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, was undertaken in 1980 by the National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER) after a comprehensive inventory of the Post was conducted. Funding for the project was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the Department of the Army, Fort Sam Houston, and the San Antonio Conservation Society.

This project was under the general supervision of Kenneth Anderson, Acting Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the National Architectural and Engineering Record. Sally Tompkins of the NAER staff was project supervisor. Project Historian was Kathryn A. Burns, San Antonio, Texas. Photographic records were provided by David Kaminsky, Roswell, New Mexico.